

McCain in order to cover up a corrupt decision. It was in that political sense --- and only in that political sense --- that the McCain letter “haunted,” the Secretary “struggled,” and the need to be more “forthcoming” manifested itself.^{4/}

Example: The Report relies on Secretary Babbitt’s statement that he was being “oblique” in his letter to McCain as evidence that he was intentionally misleading McCain. (Report at 476.) It bolsters its conclusion by reciting from Webster’s II New College Dictionary, which defines “oblique” as “indirect or evasive” or “devious or dishonest.” The full exchange in the grand jury, however, is as follows:

Q. And it’s the same embarrassment, was it not, that caused you to sign off on the admittedly misleading letter to Senator McCain a year earlier? Am I correct? So that when you signed the letter to Senator McCain in 1996 you were hoping that your response would make the whole issue go away? Is that a fair statement?

A. *I’m hesitating on that because, as I testified earlier, I think a more accurate rendition of that letter was I was really focused on the Ickes thing, on the underlying thing, and I’m not going to quarrel with you on that. I think that’s a fair conclusion, but I’m not sure it’s what was principally on my mind. That’s all.*

Q. Well, wouldn’t it be an honest statement, though, that it was part in your mind, that you were hoping by being as succinct -

A. Oblique.

Q. - and oblique that you, by not addressing the whole conversation you had with Mr. Eckstein, that maybe Senator McCain would not pursue this any further and it would all go away?

A. I would not contest that conclusion.

(Babbitt Grand Jury Test. at 289:19-290:17 (emphasis added).)

^{4/} With respect to his “more forthcoming” letter to Senator Thompson, for example, Secretary Babbitt testified in the Grand Jury:

A. Well, by this time, I’m awakening to the fact that this is a big deal and that the Eckstein - it’s obvious that he had had his deposition taken, and it didn’t take any dummy to see what was coming. So I thought I ought to get on the record my version of the Eckstein conversation.

(Babbitt Grand Jury Test. at 228:3-8.)